The Blue Ribbon **Commission on Transportation**

Draft Accords and Options for public comment

May 18, 2000

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation was created in 1998 by the Washington State Legislature and Governor Gary Locke. The commission is charged with conducting a comprehensive review of transportation needs and priorities across the state and submitting recommendations to the Governor and Legislature by December 2000.

The commission, which is comprised of 46 members from the public and private sectors, is specifically charged with taking a fresh look at the strategies currently used by state, federal and local governments for financing and maintaining transportation systems, including highways, ferries and transit. Its mission is to identify policies and actions that will improve the state's delivery of effective, long-term transportation solutions over the next twenty years.

BLUE RIBBON
COMMISSION ON
TRANSPORTATION

May, 2000

Dear Washington citizen:

Before you read this document, I would like to share with you some ideas concerning the challenges that the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation faces as we begin laying the foundation for our final recommendations.

Washington's transportation system is on a collision course with reality. Looking ahead 20 years, the Puget Sound region will experience severe congestion during much of the day. The congestion contagion is already showing signs of spreading north and south along I-5. Congestion is threatening movement on I-90 over Snoqualmie Pass and in Spokane. Critical rail and freight corridors throughout the state are bogging down. Meanwhile our ability to preserve and maintain the existing system is under severe pressure.

Just as the conditions of the system challenge us, so does the huge chasm between public perception and the views of the transportation establishment. Eighty percent of the public believe that government has enough money if it would just spend it efficiently. Critics say, "just shake up the government and then they will have sufficient resources to fix the problems."

On the other hand, the transportation establishment says "just give us enough money and we will fix the problems." Citizens do appear ready to support specific projects that will benefit them. But the reality is that the public is not about to provide any additional funding, and clearly not $3 billion a year, to the transportation establishment without a major shakeup and clear improvement in how the product is delivered. There must be understandable goals, accountability, and efficiency in planning, decision-making and on-time delivery — all measurable.

In response to the critics of government, our view is that reforms are essential but not sufficient. Along with reform must come additional money. Not in a flood, but in a staged increase that is married to specific investments and tied to specific results.

This state has no transportation plans in place today that, if implemented, would yield results that would come close to meeting the challenges of the future. One key reason is the long-standing lack of consensus on how to solve our transportation problems. Historically, our transportation planners have faced intense social and political chasms. Advocates of a particular solution scorn all other alternatives. Our state's historic legacy of mutually paralyzing opposition is our gridlock today.

This statewide, volunteer Blue Ribbon Commission does not have the time or resources to substitute for the required intensive planning efforts of the regional and

statewide planning agencies. However, we can articulate clear and understandable goals and standards, with a method for measuring results.

The public agrees that unless this state moves boldly our transportation system will be overwhelmed. "Be bold!" we are advised, and they are right. But the message is mixed about what it would mean to be bold. Successfully moving people and goods is complex. There is no single, simple solution. We know that we can neither spend nor build our way out of the problem without triggering paralyzing taxpayer and neighborhood revolts. Neither can we jaw bone our way out by appealing to the public to change behavior. Our proposed solutions must be robust, multi-modal and must fit the particular challenges, situations and land uses they serve. That means more transit, but also more roads. In dense urban areas, meeting our transportation needs will also mean more alternatives. We will also need car pools, van pools, pedestrians, bicyclists, urban centers that work and tools to change behavior. And because these alternatives are less established, they require even greater emphasis.

The commission's findings reported on the condition of the state's transportation system. The commission's options have some compelling themes, presented to you as draft accords, which are simple statements with serious intent. They lay the foundation for the commission's recommendation for a goal-based, accountable, understandable, and efficient state-wide transportation system backed by staged investment to achieve measurable results and establish trust.

The draft accords and options presented herein may not yet be bold enough to achieve a first-class transportation system in Washington. Review them and tell us how to improve them. We need your best ideas. Also, take the time to understand the perspective of those with whom you may disagree and try to craft solutions that can work the entire problem.

Contact the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation at (206) 652-2562, or toll-free at (888) 414-2562. E-mail us at blueribbon@seattle.econw.com

I look forward to hearing from you.

Doug Beighle

Commission Chairman

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Larry Pursley, *Washington State Trucking Associations*
Honorable George L. Sellar, *Washington State Senate*
Doug Vaughn, *Washington Office of Financial Management*
Honorable Judy Wilson, *Thurston County*

Several members of the commission served for some months, but left the committee due to employment changes or reassignments. They were:

Arthur Jackson, *The Bon Marché*
Tim Cies, *Governor's Executive Policy Office*
Jennifer Joly, *Governor's Executive Policy Office*
Patricia Notter, *City of Wenatchee*
Michael Roberts, *Governor's Executive Policy Office*
Honorable Dino Rossi, *Washington State Senate*
Ken Smith, *Wafer Tech*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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"For the good of Washington, we must take action"

After listening to experts from around the state and developing a set of findings on the current condition of Washington's transportation system, the 46 members of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation have taken the next step in developing a set of recommendations for the future of our transportation system. This document presents an array of 64 options for the future, derived from seven principal accords. The options represent possible approaches to achieving the unified spirit of the accords. Some are intended to work together; others are mutually exclusive and require a choice.

These options build upon the findings developed by the commission during the preceding eight months. The findings indicated that, while Washington has an extensive and interconnected transportation network, we are not prepared for current and future growth, and our investment as well as the state's economic well being are threatened. Recognizing the urgency of Washington's transportation dilemma, the options represent ways to solve critical problems in the areas of investment, revenue, and administration. The options also reflect the commission's twenty-year outlook, respecting the need to approach some problems immediately and others over a longer timeframe.

We understand that the problems facing us are enormous, and the issues complex. Nonetheless, these options and accords spell out in straightforward terms what we believe are positive steps toward putting the transportation system on firmer ground for the future. In one sentence, "For the good of Washington, we must take action."

Invest for an efficient and effective transportation system

The first priority for investing in the transportation system will be to preserve and maintain the existing system, and to keep it safe. Future investments will look at the most pressing problems facing the statewide system, among them traffic congestion. A corridor approach can be useful in strategizing for the most effective mix of investments in heavily congested areas. Technological improvements can assist in managing some traffic congestion. A broader mix of transportation modes, more aggressive land use controls, and congestion pricing are also under consideration. In the area of revenue, flexible and more predictable funding sources would permit a broader range of investment. Changes to the state sales tax and gas tax could also provide additional transportation revenue.

Guided by goals, measured by results

By establishing a set of simple, measurable, and achievable goals, we can direct our decision making to achieve those goals. The commission has developed a series of benchmarks and indicators that compare Washington to other states and to the national mean

in the areas of the physical condition of the state's highways and bridges, traffic congestion, travel options, air pollution, administrative costs, transit operating costs, safety, and freight mobility. By maintaining these benchmarks it will always be possible to measure Washington's performance in comparison to the rest of the country. It will also be possible to add future benchmarks.

Be accountable and efficient

These options attempt to address some of the frustration felt by the public, and to attach specific responsibility to projects, ensuring that projects are built on time and within budget. Begin with a thorough performance review of Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) administrative practices. Then, following improvements to data collection and cost allocation systems, use benchmarks to monitor efficiency, and set spending limits for administrative expenses. Regarding the principal governance of the state's transportation system, the options look at alternatives for the roles and selection of the secretary of WSDOT and the Transportation Commission. Challenge the existing structure of WSDOT, and examine potential changes to its authority: increasing it, reducing it, or keeping it the same. Allow government to take measured risks in areas that can reduce overall costs, such as managed competition, design-build, and the use of innovative practices and materials. Reengineering the workplace, use of the private sector to deliver projects, and sharing resources among different agencies are also proposed.

Take care of what we have

Maintaining the existing transportation system and keeping it safe is the state's highest transportation priority. This includes directing funding to take care of what we have, as well as simple investment tools such as phasing out studded tires and stricter controls on utility cuts. Revenue strategies can also contribute to maintenance of the system: development of a revenue framework based on maintenance as well as future growth; allocate sufficient funds for baseline maintenance, preservation, and safety; and periodically increase the gas tax to ensure that baseline needs are met.

Adapt for the future

Be open to future changes in technology, economy, and demographics, and be flexible enough to adapt to them. Be holistic in thinking: use a regional approach to investing, and look at transportation corridors instead of individual projects.

Allow regions to solve their own transportation problems

Transportation problems often jump jurisdictional boundaries, and, in the future, should be solved on a regional basis. This may mean the reconstitution of existing agencies, or

the creation of new regional entities. Our findings showed that transportation seems to work best when there is one entity responsible for all phases, including planning, funding, construction, and administration. Investing regionally can also allow for broader (and less time-consuming) permit review, regional programming of funds, and ways to raise revenue that are targeted to each region's needs. Regional approaches may also allow some areas to take more aggressive approaches to solving transportation problems, such as instituting commuter taxes or tolls, ride sharing credits, weight-based fees, and increased local option taxes.

Make transportation funding simpler and more flexible

Streamline and simplify the funding system, eliminating layering and restrictions. New models for funding must be found, both in order to keep pace with maintenance needs, and to loosen the existing highly categorized and relatively inflexible fund sources.

The findings note that the gas tax is the only dedicated statewide transportation revenue source available to the entire roadway system. Yet it is not distributed equitably, nor is its distribution based on objective measures of need. Gas tax distribution appears to penalize cities, and does not reflect changing demographics. New models for distribution of this important revenue source are required to fund the transportation system of the future. Distribute gas tax revenues based on road miles, miles traveled, or on other new distribution formulas that are fairer to cities. Allow gas tax distributions to change over time to accommodate growing populations and annexations.

Revenue options advanced by the commission would help to achieve a more equitable distribution of transportation funding, and allow greater flexibility in local decision making for the use of those funds.

Respect the environment

The state of the environment is the ultimate benchmark for our transportation strategies. It will not lie or gloss over problems. How we fare will be indicated by how well our species do, how well open space is preserved, the condition of groundwater, and the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink.

These options emphasize balancing the need to streamline the permitting process with the fundamental need to protect and enhance the natural and built environment. Creation of one-stop permitting centers, with integrated rather than redundant review teams, is a key option. Increasing the amount of coordination in permit review at all levels of government, reaching agreement early on issues of mitigation, and allowing the creativity of pilot projects to permeate the permit process are all among the options presented.

Encourage public involvement

The options presented herein are possible approaches for a set of recommendations to be drafted by the commission this autumn. The public is encouraged to debate the pros and cons of the options, to tell us what you think, and to participate in shaping the final 'package.' Please contact us:

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ACCORDS AND INTRODUCTION

BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON TRANSPORTATION ACCORDS

Adopted May 18, 2000

"Business as usual" no longer works. We must respond aggressively and innovatively to growth and transportation demand.

Washington's transportation system should be guided by a plan that is supported by the public and based on goals that are simple, understandable, practical, and measurable.

The public deserves a specific set of investments that will achieve the goals for an efficient and effective transportation system. We must make our roads and highways safer, provide more transportation choices, and address congestion.

The public requires accountability – they want to know what their transportation dollars are buying. This includes the assurance that projects will be built on time and within budget.

We must preserve and maintain our diverse transportation assets and ensure an integrated and functional statewide system. In addition, regions must be given the flexibility and tools to solve their own transportation problems.

Public officials and transportation agencies must make the most efficient use of public funds. But, efficiencies alone will not provide sufficient funding to address future demands.

We must streamline the permitting process for transportation projects while protecting the environment.

INTRODUCTION

Accords for the Future

Accord' speaks of agreement. The 46 members of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation represent a broad diversity of opinion and often widely divergent points of view. Over the past two years, the commission has studied, explored, and analyzed many aspects of transportation throughout the state. This pursuit led to a set of findings on the current status of the transportation system. The commission looked at how transportation is managed and administered, at every level of government. They studied the ways that money is raised for transportation spending, and examined how that money is invested. The commission has come to recognize that the state's needs and how those needs are addressed are complicated, complex and outdated.

This report marks the commission's next step in attempting to find solutions to epic traffic problems. This document represents the 'accords' of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation. Within these accords is an extensive array of 'options' or choices that citizens and political leaders will debate and then use to make decision about the state's transportation future. Some of the more pressing questions being raised by the commission are: What government should make transportation decisions? State or local? Do you prefer more roads or more transit, or a mix of both? What are some of the ways governments can build roads or provide transit services more quickly and at lower costs? What makes the most sense in raising money for transportation projects?

These accords reveal the difficulty of the remaining challenges facing the commission, because they require a choice that depends upon a vision for the future. The commission will spend the next several months listening to people throughout Washington and doing more technical analysis before developing and refining choices from this set of options. The commission's recommendations will be based in large part upon these options.

As population grows and expands throughout Washington, our transportation problems will grow ever more difficult and urgent. Solutions for the next twenty years must be found today. And that is something we can all agree on.

OPTIONS

INVEST FOR EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

The findings stress the importance of maintaining Washington's extensive transportation system. One of the most pressing demands on our existing transportation system is traffic congestion. Its solutions will require new and different investments and strategies. The findings identified a need to plan for and invest in the best mix of transportation programs and projects for our state's future. An adequate level of funding, from the appropriate sources, will be needed to achieve an efficient and effective transportation system, one that points us in the right direction to face future needs. That may mean different ways of raising funds or paying for transportation projects, methods that may not be popular.

These strategies below would begin to direct the state's transportation system toward meeting some of the goals outlined in the benchmarks, such as reducing congestion, increasing the use of non-automobile travel modes, and ensuring that the transportation system is safe and well-maintained.

1. Invest — to achieve transportation system benchmarks — in the most effective mix of strategies in the most heavily traveled corridors, using a corridor approach to transportation planning and funding.

Building infrastructure — roads, bridges, rail lines — and buying equipment are fundamental investments for a transportation system. In order to determine the most effective mix of investments, the commission will use computer modeling and analysis, and work with members of the public, transportation organizations, and stakeholders. Priorities will be identified and investment strategies can be based upon the recommended mix for various corridors and areas.

Corridor analysis should focus first on the most heavily traveled corridors — automobile, transit, and freight — to determine the most effective mix of investments. Delays should be reduced by fixing the worst bottlenecks and most congested areas first. Maintenance and preservation should be improved on the routes most heavily traveled by people and goods. The most heavily used transit corridors should be kept in good condition.

Invest in traffic system management techniques and intelligent transportation systems to provide for a more efficient flow of traffic in congested areas where effective:

- freeway on-ramp metering
- signalization improvement
- intersection modification
- priority treatment for HOVs and transit vehicles

- electronic information signs
- sharing of information by WSDOT, transmission to the public through radio and television
- incident response
- roving service patrols
- enhanced preservation. Retrofit streets and arterials for transit and non-motorized vehicles at the time such facilities undergo maintenance and preservation.

Invest in traffic demand management to reduce demand on the highway system:

- Utilize incentives such as the commute trip reduction program (in nine eligible counties); restore the ridesharing tax credit to work sites with fewer than 100 employees, and to high school and college faculty and students.
- Employ parking strategies, including cashing out employer-provided parking if the employee will travel to work other than by driving alone.
- Expand park and ride lots.
- Encourage flexible work hours, 4-day work weeks, telecommuting and employer-paid transit passes.

2. Preservation, maintenance, and safety are the top priorities for investment.

- Existing transportation infrastructure should be maintained to at least a minimum standard throughout the system.
- Pavement management systems should be used by all jurisdictions to maintain and preserve roadways most effectively. Pavement management systems include the lowest life cycle cost method for pavement repairs.
- A uniform transportation data collection system for all jurisdictions should be instituted. Components of this system should include traffic data, pavement condition data, and bridge condition data.

3. Strengthen the link between transportation investments and land use planning.

Transportation infrastructure should meet Growth Management Act concurrency requirements. Jurisdictions should provide incentives for 'smart growth' with the goal of combatting suburban sprawl and creating more compact developments that require fewer cars and fewer arterial lane miles. Jurisdictions should work with the private sector to

build more affordable housing as well as more pedestrian-oriented (urban) housing to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

4. Use cost-benefit analysis as an investment aid to select the most effective transportation investments.

While cost-benefit analysis is used for road projects, the research shows that there is no agreed upon analytic approach to dividing transportation resources among the modes. This analysis would be helpful. For now, more widespread use of cost-benefit analysis by transportation planners in all modes should help in sifting the most pressing priorities from the huge 'needs' lists now prevalent throughout the transportation system. In the most congested areas of the state, cost benefit would be an element for consideration in the most effective mix of strategies.

5. Funds should be able to be used across all modes for the best possible mix of projects to achieve transportation system goals.

New, less restrictive, revenue sources could work in parallel with investment goals and regional strategies, such as congestion relief, demand management, enhanced transit, or capacity expansion.

6. Invest in human resources needed to sustain the transportation system.

Future transportation investments should recognize the human resources necessary to supply the technical workforce capable of maintaining, preserving and improving the transportation system. State, local and regional transportation authorities are encouraged to form partnerships with labor to develop apprenticeships and training programs to insure the availability of a skilled transportation workforce.

GUIDED BY GOALS, MEASURED BY RESULTS

Since the formation of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation in 1998, benchmarks have been in the forefront of the commissioners' discussions. Benchmarks allow us to quantify where Washington stands in comparison to other states. By giving a 'baseline' of current status, these measures can then be assessed for future action, and used as performance goals. Is Washington better than, worse than, or about the same as other states? Do we need to improve? By how much? These benchmarks are based on statewide data (state, county and city levels) whenever possible and comparative data is used where available.

7. No city street, county road or state highway will be in poor condition.

Data show that in 1971 about 30% of the state's highways were in poor condition, but by 1998, through consistent preservation funding, that number declined to less than 10%. The Transportation Commission and WSDOT have made pavement and bridge preservation a high priority.

Data on the condition of local arterials are being compiled by a pilot project under the auspices of the Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program (LEAP) but are not yet available. A benchmark for local arterials should be added when the data become available.

8. No bridge will be structurally or seismically unsafe.

Public opinion surveys and the commission's findings show that traffic and highway safety are principal concerns among Washington voters. The structural safety of the thousands of bridges in Washington, especially during earthquakes, is of primary importance, and the benchmarks in this area reflect that high safety standard.

The state has been actively pursuing a program to retrofit bridges and structures identified by risk level. Over 300 bridges have been retrofitted at a cost of approximately $40 million; however, almost 1,000 bridges remain to be repaired in the two highest risk levels (1 and 2). The cost of the remaining retrofits is $560 million, of which the largest share is a single structure, the Alaskan Way Viaduct in Seattle, at some $350 million.

9. Congestion and delay will be better than the national mean.

Traffic congestion in Washington is among the nation's worst, especially in the central Puget Sound region. The annual cost to the state's drivers is 130 million lost hours and $2 billion in wasted time and resources. Excess traffic congestion also contributes to increased vehicle emissions, potential loss of business, and a diminished quality of life.

Regions that have data available may also benchmark congestion by other measures such as changes over time in person delay or average travel speed.

10. Vehicle miles traveled per capita will not increase.

Traffic congestion. In 1999, about 11% (794 miles) of the state highway system was congested; by 2020, it is projected that 37% (2,600 miles) will be congested. Between 60% and 80% of the state's urban interstate system is congested, considerably higher than the national average. National comparison shows the severity of Washington's problem and serves as a call to action. This is an aggressive target that stretches the limits of what might be achievable. Achieving this target would require a mix of various strategies, not only investing in capacity.

Driver delay. Delay per driver is a calculated average based on the number of licensed drivers in a region. It does not attempt to distinguish between individuals actually experiencing delay and those traveling on uncongested roads or not traveling at all. The data show that the Seattle-Everett metropolitan area experienced 70 hours of average delay per driver annually compared to the national average of about 40. The Vancouver-Portland region was also well above the national mean, while Tacoma and Spokane were still fortunate to be below the national average.

System usage. In the last twenty years, Washington's population has grown about 40% while vehicle miles traveled (VMT) has grown 60%. VMT had been growing faster than population since the mid-1980s; however, vehicle miles per capita have not grown quite as rapidly over the 20-year period and have leveled off in 1990 at about 9,000 miles per person per year.

11. The non-auto share of commuter trips by transit, bicycles, and other choices will increase. *(The target will be set based on year 2000 census information expected to be released later this year.)*

The data most useful for benchmarking purposes are the U.S. Census Bureau's journey-to-work surveys. The trend from 1980 to 1990 was a declining share of non-auto trips. That trend will need to be reversed if growth is to be accommodated in urban areas. The 2000 census will be able to provide recent data on whether the downward trend continues or whether it has been reversed.

12. The administrative efficiency of Washington state transportation agencies, including state, counties and cities, will be at the national mean in the short term and in the top 25% in the longer term. *(Interim annual targets can report progress toward meeting this benchmark.)*

Benchmark committee members spent more time examining issues of cost efficiency than any other single topic area. Because every transportation agency and government entity has slightly different methods of categorizing, accounting for and tracking expenditures, finding common ground for comparisons was extraordinarily difficult.

Nevertheless commissioners felt strongly that aggressive targets were important in this area to ensure that public confidence in government use of funds could be restored. While dramatic reorganizations and reductions in costs are common in the private sector, public sector efficiencies are often impeded by structural barriers like civil service regulations, procurement requirements, and public and community processes.

Commissioners considered the following broad types of measures before concluding that, although somewhat rough, the proposed measure was the best available general way to communicate the commission's intent that all Washington transportation agencies become significantly more efficient. The commission welcomes additional options from stakeholders and the public.

WSDOT costs:

Administration as a percent of total spending. The most common method of measuring administrative cost efficiency is to calculate administrative costs as a percent share of total disbursements. Administrative costs for the state transportation system range from approximately 8% to about 15% of the total, depending on which costs are included in the definition of administration and how large the total disbursements are in any given year. Thus, in a year with a large new capital program the administrative percent of total might look small even if the functions were exactly the same as the previous year in which there was a smaller total capital program.

Comparisons using federal government data appeared to indicate that Washington was at the high end of administrative costs, near such high-cost states as California, New York, and Illinois. However, the data reported to the federal government included total state overhead costs, including miscellaneous expenditures not reported in the basic categories of construction, operation or maintenance.

Washington's administrative totals (including non-WSDOT costs) appeared to fluctuate between 10% and 12% in recent years compared to a national median around 7%. However, WSDOT's direct 'support' programs[1] are at about 8% of total WSDOT disbursements and there is no information on what costs are included by other states in their

[1] 'Support' programs include the following: Program D — highway management and facilities; Program S — executive management, regional administration, finance and administration, management information systems; Program T — planning, data and research; Program U — charges from other state agencies, including attorney general, auditor, personnel services, revenue collection services.

reports. The Washington Roundtable in its recent report recommended that administrative costs in transportation agencies not exceed 10%. Depending on how that percentage was calculated, WSDOT might or might not already be below that threshold.

Growth in administration spending. When compared to the national average, Washington's administrative costs grew more rapidly than other states' costs, which grew at about the rate of inflation. The most rapidly growing components were planning in the early years of the decade as new ISTEA and Growth Management Act requirements were mandated and management information systems (MIS), with significant Y2K costs in the latter half of the decade.

WSDOT operation and maintenance costs. O&M spending per mile for Washington has been below the national mean since 1992. Previous data regarding road surface conditions indicated that Washington's state highways were above average. The committee chose not to use these data as it believed they were an indicator of a policy choice about spending levels and not a measure of efficiency.

WSDOT construction costs. The committee considered various ways to measure efficiency in construction and project delivery. Costs per lane mile are often used in comparisons, but the figures vary enormously from project to project, depending on factors the committee members felt were unrelated to the efficiency of the transportation system, e.g., the price of real estate, the topography, geologic conditions and the labor market. When excluding these variables and looking at construction costs alone, Washington appeared to be right at the national average. Project delivery costs overall do appear to be high in Washington for reasons related to our environmental and permitting regulations. The committee was not able to identify consistent and comparable data on project delivery costs for benchmarking purposes.

City and County Costs:

As with the state, the committee began by reviewing available city and county data that indicated that administration costs as a percent of total transportation disbursements appear high, especially for urbanized and older jurisdictions. County and city staff advising the committee provided a number of briefings on the nature of cost accounting and classification in local government. While both cities and counties use the state's budgetary accounting and reporting system, there is little consistency across jurisdictions in how costs are classified. What appear to be wide differences in administrative costs are also attributable to whether a jurisdiction maintains its planning, engineering and construction management functions in-house or contracts them out, in which case the associated overhead is not carried on the jurisdiction's books.

Using data developed by Jensen Consulting for the Washington Roundtable, the committee learned that overall growth in spending for Washington's counties and cities followed similar patterns to the trend for the state. Administrative costs grew considerably faster than inflation and also grew faster than spending on maintenance or construction.

Expenditures in the categories of construction, maintenance, and administration are not tracked on an individual jurisdiction basis at this time; however, a legislative pilot project is underway to create system-wide databases of transportation spending. Together with contextual indicators such as population, miles of roadways and vehicle miles traveled, as well as outcome measures such as pavement condition, data will eventually provide the ability to track and measure the performance of the transportation system at the local levels. Not wanting to benchmark local governments' costs separately from state costs until then, the committee opted to set a single benchmark for administrative costs at the state level for now.

13. Public transit operating costs will be at the peer group median.

Transit operating costs. Transit agencies report their revenues and expenditures, along with operating statistics, to the Federal Transit Administration annually. The data entered into a national transit database allow comparisons to agencies of similar size elsewhere in the country. Washington's transit agencies have consistently ranked high in costs per passenger and per vehicle hour compared to their peers nationally. However, in recent years cost indicators have been flat or declining for Washington transit agencies.

In the wake of Initiative 695, transit revenues are greatly reduced, which is resulting in cutbacks in administration, planning and customer service at Washington transit agencies. It will also eventually lead to cutbacks in transit operations, presumably by elimination of some of the less productive routes.

For these reasons, past trends may not be a useful guide to future performance. The committee preferred cost per vehicle revenue hour for benchmarking purposes, but asked that additional research be done to collect cost per passenger mile before making a final recommendation.

The committee chose to develop 'indicators' for safety, air quality and freight mobility. These are an important aspect of the transportation system but are not readily able to be benchmarked because of the limits of available data or because these elements are affected by too many variables other than transportation investments.

14. Fatal accidents will continue to decline.

All accident rates have been declining here and in other states for a number of years. The reasons include increased enforcement of drunk driving laws and higher seat belt use. The committee first reviewed fatality rates and concluded that Washington was already considerably better than the national average. The committee thus recommended the creation of an 'indicator' for traffic safety, rather than a benchmark.

15. Air quality, carbon monoxide and ozone, will be maintained at federal standards.

For ozone and carbon monoxide, the data showed a declining incidence of pollution since the 1970s and a steady state in maintaining federal standards in recent years. The committee chose not to suggest benchmark targets since federal laws already require it and mechanisms are in place to monitor and sanction regions that do not comply. Therefore, the committee chose to adopt air quality as an indicator rather than a benchmark.

16. Growth in trade-related freight movement will be accommodated on our transportation system.

The committee chose to use data on truck and rail car volume numbers as an indicator to measure the growth of freight movement on the state's transportation system. Air cargo data were not included because it was assumed that all air shipments eventually travel to their final destination by either truck or rail and are thus already included in the previous numbers.

BE ACCOUNTABLE

"Who is in charge?" is a question that resonated in the commission's discussion of administration of transportation programs in Washington. Findings noted the large number of governmental entities responsible for transportation and the resultant confusion on the part of the public over accountability. The findings stated that transportation governance seems to work best when authority for planning, funding, and implementing a project is consolidated.

Along with the confusion over authority comes a growing frustration on the part of the public over projects that take many years to complete, and are over projected budget.- Such delays and overruns have come almost to be expected, but make for a distrustful and skeptical public. The findings ask for further exploration of ways to reduce the time and cost of implementing a transportation project, and improve efficiencies in administering transportation programs.

17. Conduct a thorough review of WSDOT administration practices.

The fact that there is still discussion over how WSDOT's costs are allocated among various functions that may or may not be described as administrative is sufficient reason to call for a thorough review of administrative practices. A complete review would achieve clarity of operational costs thorough a performance review of practices. It may also reveal areas of inefficiency. This option would require the Secretary of the WSDOT to conduct a review no later than X (date), including the following:

- Scale and size of accounting and Management Information Systems division staffs.
- Possible duplication of functions among regions.
- Possible application of computer and Internet technology for administration purposes.
- Scale and size of other support programs, including program D, S, T, and U functions. (see footnote on page 7 for description)

18. Use and apply benchmarks to assess and monitor efficiency.

By comparing Washington against other states, a clearer picture of Washington's rank among its peers will emerge.

This option recommends instituting the benchmark committee's work as the basis for an oversight board ('Commission for Transportation Accountability') or a restructured transportation commission. The goals must be measurable and used for continuous improvement, and can be aspirational, for example:

- For the 2001 to 2003 biennial budget, DOT administrative costs would be below the national median;
- For the 2003-2005 and subsequent biennia, WSDOT administrative costs would be in the top 25% most efficient of all the states.

19. Cap and monitor other transportation administration costs.

Cap local and regional government administrative costs at 10% for the following functions:

- Management, general services, planning, facilities and training
- Create an incentive structure for jurisdictions achieving the cap
- Report ongoing measures of administrative efficiency for all jurisdictions

20. Improve data collection and cost allocation.

The Joint Legislative Audit Review Committee (JLARC) audit was concerned that it is difficult to assess actual costs of WSDOT operations. The audit recommended changes to WSDOT's management and financial accounting systems to enable better review of project histories throughout all phases. WSDOT's performance could then be compared accurately to other states and other jurisdictions, and consistently analyzed against benchmark targets. The findings state that comparative figures are also difficult to come by at the local (city and county) levels. Without access to comparative data, it is not possible to measure accurately the cost and quality of services. Refining budget accounting and record system codes and guidelines can result in better analysis and reporting of operations and maintenance costs at city and county levels.

21. Change the role and or selection process for the Transportation Commission to clarify accountability.

The commission's responsibility could be expanded to a single point of accountability for reporting on or monitoring the state transportation system at all levels. This could include all state, city, county, and special agency components of that system.

The commission would adopt benchmarks and cost-effectiveness standards, report on the accomplishment of those benchmarks and standards, establish system standards for highways and other elements that are of statewide significance, evaluate regional plans for compliance with the state system plan and certify regional plans, and review and recommend policy changes that would enhance the accomplishment of system goals.

a. **Have the Transportation Commission become a single point of accountability for reporting or monitoring the performance of the state transportation system at all levels, including benchmarks and cost-effectiveness standards.**
b. **Have the Transportation Commission be responsible for policy and budget, recommend legislation, and select DOT secretary.** *(This describes the commission's current role.)*
c. **Have the Commission act in advisory role to the governor.** *(This is the model practiced by ten other states.)*
d. **Eliminate transportation commission.**
e. **Make appointments of Commissioners from each congressional district.**

22. Change the selection process for the DOT Secretary to increase accountability.

Shall the position of WSDOT Secretary stress its advisory role (both to the governor and the transportation commission) or more accountability for outcomes? The selection of and reporting by the secretary could be done in one of several ways:

a. **Retain the current system, with the transportation commission selecting the secretary.**
b. **Have the governor appoint the secretary.**
c. **Have the secretary elected by popular vote.**

23. Reevaluate WSDOT's jurisdiction over highways and ferries.

The jurisdiction of WSDOT should be examined, both as it deals with the various transportation modes, and how it exercises its authority statewide. Use the recommendations of the road jurisdiction study to evaluate jurisdictions. WSDOT could either be centralized to provide more authority at the state level, or its authority could be devolved to regions. Reorganization, reassignment, and the boundaries of WSDOT's current districts are all to be considered. Regardless of the model of governance, the level of responsibility should match the fiscal capacity.

a. **Increase WSDOT's responsibility.**

WSDOT would restore and maintain current responsibility for all state-owned and state interest facilities, and add arterials of regional significance. A part of the additional responsibility would be to maintain a continuous transportation system plan stipulating

full corridor requirements for the movement of people and goods.

b. Keep WSDOT responsibility as is.

WSDOT would continue to be responsible for all state-owned and state interest facilities (highways, ferries, passenger rail, some airports), as it currently is.

c. Reduce WSDOT's responsibility.

WSDOT would be responsible for highways of state significance only. Responsibility for other state-owned roads not classified as highways of statewide significance would go to counties or to regions.

TAKE CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE

The findings speak of a system of many miles and multiple modes. It is how we get around. The transportation system is also a large part of the state's economy, with over $3.7 billion in public money and $11 billion from households and businesses invested each year in Washington's transportation. The findings also note that that this system represents an asset that must be maintained, so that Washington continues to receive cost–effective transportation services.

24. Reduce highway wear and tear through higher pavement standards where it is cost-effective.

The key to well-maintained roads is investing in durable pavements and minimizing damage caused by drivers.

Generally, there are three types of pavement used for roads in Washington: Portland cement concrete, asphalt concrete, and bituminous surface treatment. Portland cement is the most expensive (a rough estimate is $1 million per lane mile) and is used primarily on the interstate system. Most of the state and local systems, however, use asphalt concrete or bituminous surface treatment, that have half the life or less than Portland cement. A new way of designing asphalt concrete, called Superpave, is now being tested and is expected to extend pavement life and reduce maintenance and preservation costs.

A higher pavement standard that will better withstand wear and tear in some high volume areas will clearly save money over the long term.

25. Phase in a studded tire ban.

In 1999, Washington banned the use of older type studded tires in favor of lightweight studs, which are estimated to reduce road wear by only 15 percent. Studies indicate that over the course of its 30,000-mile useful life, a typical (not lightweight) studded tire will remove between one-half and three-quarters of a ton of asphalt cement mix from the roadway. Studies also indicate the cost of material roadway replacement is at least $8 to $15 per studded tire, and if the pavement adjacent to the rutted lane is also replaced, replacement costs can soar to $40 to $50 per studded tire. This option suggests that the work begun by the legislature to discourage studded tires should be continued by phasing in a studded tire ban, in favor of all-season radial tires or other new technology.

26. Require a strict model ordinance for utility cuts on roads and streets to reduce pavement damage to be used throughout the state.

Elements of the model ordinance include a 'joint trenching' policy, an expedited permit process for joint trenching, a multi-year waiting period to re-cut the roadway for compa-

nies not willing to joint trench, a refrain from trenching during peak traffic hours, and some flexibility for low-density, non-urban areas.

27. Develop a new funding framework based on two categories: Maintaining the current system and improving the system to meet the needs of growth, economic initiatives and changing circumstances.

At the state, regional and local levels:

- basic functions would be funded by directly distributed formula funds (e.g. gas tax for highways and ferries, and other sources for public transportation, rail and trip reduction programs);
- improvements and all other investments would be funded by flexible, non-18th Amendment funds.

28. Provide baseline allocations to all jurisdictions and modes for maintenance, preservation and safety.

a. Provide a baseline allocation for state highway operation, maintenance, preservation and safety programs, for operation of the basic auto ferry system and for WSDOT agency overhead from state gas tax funds.

Current (1999) estimated annual cost to provide baseline operation and maintenance of the state system is $930 million at Transportation Commission policy levels. This is not the current budgeted level but rather the amount needed to fund service levels as adopted in the Washington Transportation Plan. It is assumed that efficiencies will be identified to reduce this figure.

b. Provide baseline allocations for roadway preservation, maintenance, and safety to cities and counties from state gas tax funds. In addition to existing distributions, convert some competitive grant programs into pass-through distributions to accomplish this.

c. Determine adequate levels of funding for basic operation and maintenance of public transit, passenger-only ferry service, passenger and freight rail services and trip reduction programs and ensure a basic fund allocation to these modes that keeps pace with inflation.

As with the roadway system, allocate sufficient funds for the basics in these alternate modes. The estimated baseline costs, at 1999 policy levels, to provide local public transit service is $1,126 million, passenger ferry service $8.5 million and all other modes $48 million. The loss of the motor vehicle excise tax through Initiative 695 has left a funding gap of some $700 million in transit and ferry services that will need to be considered.

29. Ensure preservation and maintenance of city and county streets and roads through new funding distribution. Consider these options:

a. Use a new mileage-based distribution formula for city and county gas tax funds (converted from grant programs) for maintenance and preservation and require the use of pavement management systems.

For cities and counties, newly converted preservation pass-through funds could be distributed according to new mileage-based formulas:

Example of Gas Tax Redistribution Formula
(For illustration only—NOT a recommendation)

	Number	Current alloc. gas tax/pop.	Centerline miles	Option: gas tax/mile	Arterial miles	Option: gas tax/mile
Cities				@ $3,333/mile		@ $5,000/mile
Under 2,500	148	$3,134,800	1,348	$4,493,333		
2,500-5,000	32	$2,531,435	852	$2,840,000		
5,000-22,500	63	$14,169,860	3,279		344	$1,717,850
Over 22,500	35	$53,652,898	8,786		1,402	$7,010,950
TOTAL	278	$73,508,993	14,265	$7,333,333		$8,728,800
					urban arterial miles	
Counties	39				1,610	$8,050,000

- Cities under 5,000 could receive pass-through funds for preservation of all centerline miles at a rate of $50,000 per mile once every 15 years or the equivalent of $3,333 per mile on an annual basis. ($50,000 is the average cost per mile of a 2" asphalt overlay.)
- Cities over 5,000 could receive pass-through funds for arterial miles only, but the rate would be higher: $50,000 per arterial mile once every 10 years or the equivalent of $5,000 per mile on an annual basis. Under this

distribution formula, $16 million in funds would be needed for cities, or the equivalent of one-half cent of gas tax.

- Counties could receive pass-through preservation funds for urban arterial miles at the same rate as larger cities, creating a need for an additional $8 million.
- Currently, the Small City account receives $7.5 million a year; the Urban Arterial trust account receives about $30 million per year. The proposed conversion could be funded using existing funds. It would be preferable, however, to create the conversion and then back-fill the redirected funds with new money allocated to improvement projects.

b. Have counties assume jurisdiction and funding of city streets in cities under 5,000 in population.

Since the smallest cities generally do not have professional public works staff or pavement management systems, their ability to manage their own streets is very limited. Rather than provide them with formula funds for preservation along with technical assistance, have ownership of and responsibility for these streets go over to the authority of the county in which each city is located. Gas tax funding would follow the jurisdiction transfer. This option would remove the need for extensive technical assistance and grant programs for small cities.

30. Increase the statewide gas tax periodically to meet needs for basic maintenance, preservation and safety of the highway, bridge and auto ferry systems, as well as city streets and county roads.

Annual increases in the state gas tax would allow maintenance to keep pace with inflation. Assuming 3% annual inflation, the increase for basic maintenance would be $28 million in 2001, requiring a one-cent increase in the gas tax.

31. Create a statewide weight-based vehicle fee.

Such a fee could be imposed at any level up to $xx per ton of vehicle weight. For very heavy vehicles, this would be intended to recover revenues from MVET, no longer paid by trucks since the passage of I-695, and partially to replace funds needed for maintenance and preservation of highways, streets, and roads.

ALLOW REGIONS TO SOLVE THEIR OWN TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS

With multiple jurisdictions sharing authority, it is difficult to establish priorities and coordinate effectively. The commission's findings stated that transportation governance works best when authority for all aspects of a project rests with a single entity. The findings also noted that existing methods of funding projects may not be effective for the state's future transportation system needs. Changes to the funding system may make it more flexible.

A regional approach, whether for revenue, investing, or administration, envisions entire corridors rather than individual projects, flexible rather than restrictive funding, and seamless boundaries instead of multiple jurisdictions. The findings recommended further evaluation of new and existing models of regional governance, investment, and funding. A regional approach to transportation can lead to more effective and efficient leadership and help achieve the efficiency benchmark. It may also respond to the frequent critique of the 'peanut-butter' approach to funding. There will need to be a method for ensuring a regional entity makes progress in achieving the benchmarks for the transportation system. Critics argue a region too may be inclined to 'peanut-butter' funding or to spend funding that is not the most effective mix of investments.

32. Take a new regional approach to investing. There should be better coordination of transportation planning, funding, investments, and decision making in all jurisdictions.

In order to specifically address varying transportation needs throughout the state, some state transportation mobility funding should be shared with regions:

- grant regions revenue authority to address their high priority needs.
- block-grant a percentage of any new state mobility funds to the regions; regions will decide how to spend these funds.
- grant regions ability to seek ballot approval for significant transportation revenue decisions.
- focus the regions' investment on transportation corridors.
- integrate transportation and land use planning, and
- grant regions authority to use congestion pricing.

33. Provide regions with the ability to plan, select, fund and implement or contract for implementation of projects identified to meet the region's transportation goals.

The intent is to simplify and minimize structural redundancy rather than to add new layers. Options for such authorities may include:

a. Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs)/ Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

The MPO and RTPO process is intended to foster ongoing coordinated transportation planning among the numerous jurisdictions within a region. With a role already strengthened by the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act to include project selection across jurisdictions and modes, new models could expand that authority:

MPOs/RTPOs could have planning and funding responsibilities for regional transportation corridors and set standards for regional operation.

Alternately, MPOs/RTPOs could have planning, funding, and implementation responsibilities and become regional project delivery agencies for large multi-jurisdictional projects.

b. Counties

Additional transportation modes and facilities could be added to the county's responsibilities. Regional land use and development authority could be added to county government. Federal and state funds could flow to the county along with any new responsibilities. Local option funding could be increased.

c. Transit/transportation authorities.

TransLink in Vancouver, BC, has assumed responsibility for roads and transit in that metropolitan area, as well as planning, service levels, and funding.

d. Or, if necessary , create new organizations.

A new regional entity, possibly modeled on one of the above options, would be responsible for some or all transportation funding and project selection only. Funding would follow ownership.

The membership for the new entity could be through one of several ways:

- Directly elected by popular vote of regional citizens.
- Federated body, composed of ex officio members representing various jurisdictions within the region, such as is currently done with Sound Transit.
- Appointed, by governor, legislature, a federated body, or regional representatives.

34. Create regional revenue sources.

Create a 'tool kit' of potential revenue sources that can also work in parallel with investment goals and congestion relief strategies. These sources would be considered for public approval either statewide or by new regional transportation authorities for specifically defined transportation projects:

a. Optional regional vehicle miles traveled (VMT) charge.

Develop a three-year or five-year demonstration program to impose a charge based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT) up to 2 cents per mile, on the honor system the first year and subject to odometer checks the second and third years.

b. Examine the feasibility of creating HOT lanes; for example, on I-405 and SR 167 in King County. Use public-private initiatives.

I-405 and SR 167 have been identified as the most likely candidate facilities for the benefits of high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes. A request for proposal could be issued to determine the feasibility of a project, based on the lessons learned from recent experiences with other projects in Washington.

c. Evaluate existing authorization for cities and counties to impose a new commuter parking tax on employers and consider expanding authority regionally.

The tax could be a flat rate per parking stall (regardless of whether provided free or at a cost to employees). Alternatively, impose a commuter parking tax on employer-provided parking subsidies (e.g. if an employer provides parking worth $100,000 per year, that amount would be taxed at a given percentage.)

d. Authorize a local option ride sharing tax credit to cities and counties.

This would provide an incentive to employers to develop and fund trip reduction programs and to offset the burden of new parking taxes on businesses.

e. Authorize tolls for use of congested facilities, to pay for new facilities and/or to pay for replacement and repair of existing facilities.

Develop a phased implementation strategy to impose tolls on one or several of the most heavily congested routes in urban areas, e.g. I-5, I-90, I-405, SR 520 or SR 167. Authorized under the federal value pricing pilot project, and building on the Puget Sound Regional Council's pricing study (currently underway), the implementation could begin with research on pricing models, electronic revenue collection technology and selection of a suitable first project.

Allow tolls to be imposed on an existing or new roadway or bridge to pay for the development and construction of a new, parallel facility that adds capacity to the corridor. Thus users of the corridor pay for the addition of new capacity.

f. Authorize congestion pricing in congested urban areas.

Congestion pricing allocates costs to users of a specific facility at a specific time of day. Placing tolls on congested roadways during rush hour can result in more free-flowing traffic on the most crowded highways. Thus, those using the toll roads or bridges pay a fee for the delay they impose on others during busy periods.

BE EFFICIENT

As the findings state, transportation project delivery is time-consuming and expensive. Speaking generally, government agencies have lost the public's confidence in their ability to do projects well, to innovate, or to be efficient. Government agencies find it difficult to be innovative because of regulations they must follow and systemic problems such as personnel and budget processes. Whether through conventional methods of belt-tightening, or through innovative approaches, government must be willing to take the risks necessary to produce systemwide change in its ability to get projects done.

35. Reengineer the workplace to achieve greater efficiency.

Establish project teams, with an emphasis on setting goals and predicting outcomes. Encourage innovation among employees, using the WSDOT quality program model. Incorporate elements of total quality management into business practices. Form partnerships with labor organizations to develop apprenticeships and training programs to ensure the availability of a skilled workforce to deliver projects and service.

36. Consider the use of managed competition for operations and maintenance functions.

Under managed competition, private sector bids are sought for operations and maintenance activities, and then compared to a bid from the public sector staff currently performing the service. Legislative authorization would be required to permit managed competition. Alternately, because managed competition is very restricted under current state law, it may be best to introduce a pilot program, perhaps through mediation between labor and management. While other jurisdictions have realized cost savings, there is debate as to whether cost control in the public sector rests with the group bidding on and performing the work

37. Authorize and encourage jurisdictions to share resources.

This approach was successfully instituted in the neighboring cities of Kelso and Longview, Washington. Sharing of resources may include consolidation of overlapping functions, merging of departments, and sharing of equipment, personnel, and other resources, such as technology and practices. Additionally, this option may include establishment of a human resources skills bank of transportation professionals and, in conjunction with labor, development of a program that would allow state, local and regional transportation authorities to draw from skills bank during peak periods of need. Legislative authorization is required to permit sharing resources among jurisdictions and eliminate restrictions.

38. Improve project management.

There is a need to strengthen oversight and accountability for project delivery. This includes discipline to achieve project delivery targets. Incentives are needed to deliver projects in a shorter time. Require project managers to be involved in the final design phase of a project. Oregon has concluded that this approach brings a higher level of knowledge to projects and pays dividends during bidding and future project planning.

39. Take measured (appropriate) risks.

Though risk-taking is not often associated with the public sector, assessing an appropriate risk can lead to decisions that improve a project's efficiency. Risk-taking in a large construction project recognizes the time value of money. The rewards of risk-taking include early completion, below cost completion, improved design. Pooling risks may make risk taking (and the potential for mistakes) more politically palatable. Agencies might not be rewarded or recognized for time- and/or money-saving risks taken.

40. Reduce overall construction costs.

Construction costs account for 56% of total project costs. Construction cost savings can be realized through the use of innovative methods and new materials, advance purchases, wages, and mitigation costs. Also contributing to higher construction costs are the state's two-year funding cycle and the phasing of project budgets. Funding through phases and cycles does not contribute to achieving lowest possible construction costs. These are outlined below

a. Save money on materials and methods.

There are incentives to use innovative materials and methods, particularly when the private sector is involved in construction and operation of public rights-of-way. Examples include:

- At the beginning of a project, develop a construction strategy, including lifecycle costing. Use value engineering when costing the project and its components — 80% of a project's cost can be found in 20% of the functional items.
- To the extent possible, do simultaneous instead of sequential project phasing. Also, include utility work as part of the construction contract, or coordinate roadway projects with necessary utility work, enabling some costs to be shared.
- Pre-purchase of some materials may be possible early in project development. This can save costs later. Also, the use of standardized project design for similar capital facilities can reduce overall costs .

b. Use right-of-way 'banking.'

Allow early purchase of rights-of-way, prior to completion of all environmental and other permitting, so that land is purchased before it becomes unaffordable.

c. Continue to assess prevailing wage survey techniques.

This option can reduce labor costs in some areas of the state, particularly non-metropolitan areas.

d. Reduce mitigation costs.

Document the amount spent on mitigation (as a percentage of overall cost); seek permit reform to reduce costs.

41. Use enhanced team planning/partnering.

Early involvement of all participants in a capital project, known as 'partnering,' has proven successful in building construction projects and can be used in transportation projects as well. Through partnering, early agreement on roles, responsibilities, dispute resolution, project and team scope, and mitigation measures is achieved, and consensus is built early in the development of the project. The result can be faster project delivery. Projects can benefit from participation of all interested parties early in the planning process. This can apply to interagency agreements as well, so roles are clear, redundant reviews eliminated, and decisions stick; however, the process can be time consuming and agreements are not binding.

42. Do environmental review early.

Establish standards for environmental reviews that are consistent across jurisdictions. Begin at the preliminary project layout (or comprehensive plan phase) instead of waiting for initial project design. Allow environmental review to inform the design, which can result in a better overall project.

Responding to constraints on staff and financial resources, other states and other countries have been using alternative methods to get projects completed efficiently. Alternative project delivery (APD) can result in projects that meet the public's desire for projects that are timely, cost-effective, and accountable. These types of projects also can yield innovations in design and construction. The principal alternative is the design-build process with its variations, including various level private sector roles in creating, financing, owning, and operating projects.

43. Incorporate the design-build process and its variations into construction projects to achieve the goals of time-savings and avoidance of costly change orders.

In design-build projects, a single entity is hired to carry out all phases of a project, from initial design to final construction. The advantages of design-build are derived from the collaborative effects of the designer-builder relationship, the potential for innovation and greater cost control. Examples in other states have shown significant savings in total project cost but even greater savings in the time of project delivery, which can be reduced by as much as one-third. For all transportation agencies to use design-build and its variations, greater authorization is required from the Legislature, including legislative adjustments to allow and include more public-private teams, and authorization to develop pilot projects to test various project delivery methods to measure best results.

Variations of design-build include:

a. Allow private construction and management of transportation activities.

Having to consider future maintenance costs creates an incentive for builders to develop innovative construction approaches that can lead to longer life of roadways and other transportation facilities. This option most closely resembles the state's public-private initiatives program.

b. Use build-transfer-operate approach.

This alternative allows public financing and construction of transportation facilities, which are then leased to private companies for management and operation. Funds are often raised through toll collection.

44. Increase education and training in alternative project delivery (ADP) concepts.

There is a perceived lack of understanding on the part of public agencies, the legislature, and the public about alternative project delivery (ADP). Jurisdictions with expertise could assist in an education effort. The authority to share resources between governmental entities would need to be allowed. This would require departments and agencies involved to be trained, and to train outside entities.

45. Use the private sector to deliver projects and transportation services.

Some pilot projects allowing the private sector to provide expertise and financing in developing transportation projects have been attempted in Washington. Using private funding, these projects can provide cost-effective transportation facilities, and the possibility of getting large-scale projects built when public funds are lacking. The public has demonstrated some distrust of for-profit operators of public facilities.

Barriers preventing the private sector from providing transportation services should be examined in light of some public expressed interest in alternative services, which could include ferry, bus, or monorail.

MAKE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING SIMPLER AND MORE FLEXIBLE

With funding 'needs' exceeding available resources, and infrastructure demands spreading across several jurisdictions, new models for funding must be found. The findings suggest further examination of a regional approach to transportation funding, and a loosening of highly categorized, restrictive, and relatively inflexible fund sources.

The findings note that the gas tax is the only dedicated statewide transportation revenue source available to the entire roadway system. Yet it is not distributed equitably, nor is its distribution based on objective measures of need. Gas tax distribution appears to penalize cities, and its distribution does not reflect changing demographics. New models for distribution of this important revenue source are required to fund the transportation system of the future.

These strategies below would help to achieve a more equitable distribution of transportation funding, and greater flexibility in local decision making for the use of those funds.

46. Create a funding structure that is efficient, rational, and understandable.

Treat the state, counties and cities comparably in how their transportation facilities are funded. Shift funding focus away from jurisdictions to functions (maintenance, safety, and mobility) and to corridors. Shift funding focus to user fees — those who use the system should also pay for the system.

Fund sources should be clearly linked to functions in ways that are easy to explain. Link transportation-related taxes to transportation purposes that are easily understood. Ensure that basic operations and maintenance are adequate, and that growth and change over time can be addressed. Simplify grant funding by loosening restrictions.

Recognize differential regional needs, both rural and urban. Focus on mobility, not only on raising revenues. Use long-term financing to pay for facilities that have a long-term useful life.

a. Revenue measures should contribute to streamlining and simplifying the existing transportation funding structure and avoid further layering of fund restrictions.

Grant programs should be consolidated and grant criteria loosened.

b. Simplify most state grant funding programs by eliminating local match and leveraging requirements.

Adjust local match and leveraging requirements to allow single source funding of most projects. Create incentives to match or leverage funds to encourage partnering, but do

not make it a requirement, especially on smaller projects. Create one-stop grant funding centers where all competitive funds are disbursed under regional priority programming agreements and administered using a single application process.

c. Ensure that access to funds among governmental jurisdictions and transportation modes is equitable and does not favor certain parts of the system.

47. Change the formula for distribution of future gas tax funds to cities and counties.

Base future distributions of new gas tax funds to cities on road miles and other demographic and utilization factors (e.g. growth rate, employment base, VMT), not on population as is currently done. Population by itself is not a good indicator of infrastructure and funding needs. The counties currently use a distribution formula with multiple variables, including road miles, need and population, agreed upon through the Road Jurisdiction Commission (RJC) process. Cities should develop a new formula through the next RJC process.

a. Redistribute future gas tax funds to cities.

Under this option, city gas tax funds would be distributed in one of two ways:

(i.) City direct gas tax fund distribution:

- 70% based on population
- 10% based on centerline miles
- 20% based on adjusted arterial miles

A more accurate variable to use in lieu of centerline and arterial miles would be lane miles, however these data are not available for cities. Consequently, the arterial mile data were adjusted to approximate lane miles for each jurisdiction. It was assumed the larger the population, the more large arterials the city would have and the more lane miles would exist. The following formula was used to adjust arterial centerline miles to lane miles:

Population	Adjusted Arterial Formula
22,500 or more	4 x number of arterial centerline miles
5,000 – 22,500	3 x number of arterial centerline miles
5,000 and under	2 x number of arterial centerline miles

(ii.) Base distribution plus new revenue distribution

Cities would receive a base distribution equal to the direct gas tax distribution made to cities in 1998. Any increase in revenue over the base in future years would be distributed

to cities based on the following:

- 50% based on population
- 25% based on centerline miles
- 25% based on adjusted arterial miles

The adjusted arterial mile is calculated the same as in (i) above.

Under both options, future levels of funding would shift widely from previous distributions for some jurisdictions. While the alternative formulas are more sensitive to density and growth, they represent a significant change and a gradual 'ramping' of the formulas over a period of years might be appropriate.

b. Adjust future county and city gas tax distributions such that direct distribution dollars for basic functions follow road miles upon incorporation or annexation.

Currently, when a previously unincorporated area becomes a city or is annexed to a city, no new tax funds are made available to that city. Gas tax that was allocated to the county for the unincorporated road miles continues to be part of all county funding. Cities as a group receive a single fixed distribution that is divided among them by population, resulting in diminishing funds per capita as new cities are created. This penalizes cities and appears to go against the intent of the Growth Management Act that encourages concentration of facilities in incorporated areas.

Future methods of distributing gas tax might allocate funds based on a percentage of total statewide county road miles (or other variables) for counties and a percentage of total countywide city street miles for cities. Thus, as annexations and incorporations occur, funds can be shifted over time based on local comprehensive plan facility needs.

48. Jointly program and administer state competitive and pass-through funds by consolidating services provided by separate agencies.

The WSDOT Local Roadways Division and the Transportation Improvement Board would merge into a new hybrid organization. The new entity would manage the TIB's existing grant programs as well as the new pass-through funds along with a systematic program of technical assistance. The goal of the merger would not be to achieve efficiencies through staff reductions, but rather to achieve better coordination and enhanced services to local agencies. The new hybrid entity could have the following features:

- Located within WSDOT, but with a separate governing board with stakeholders represented on it. The governing board would still set policy and program criteria.

- WSDOT expertise in technical assistance to local government (e.g. pavement management systems) would continue to be utilized. WSDOT's functions in setting and monitoring standards would also be retained.

49. Keep funding sources predictable and at pace with the economy. New revenue should be dedicated to transportation improvements, including roads, ferries, freight mobility, transit and trip reduction. Options for predictable and flexible funding include:

a. Authorize an increase in the state sales tax.

Each one-tenth of one percent increase in the state sales tax would raise $80 million per year. With new revenues dedicated to transportation purposes, modes would compete against each other for the best use of funds in each region. Funds could be dedicated to statewide, regional, and local projects, as well as to a 'very large project' fund.

b. Authorize a sales tax on gas, to be imposed on the underlying commodity price, not on the full price that includes state and federal fuel taxes.

The full price of a gallon of gas already includes state and federal motor fuel taxes: a sales tax on the full price of gas would represent double taxation. Therefore, this option suggests that a sales tax could apply only on the underlying commodity price. Dedicate the proceeds of the new tax to transportation purposes. The revenue from this source would fluctuate with the commodity price. Funds raised could be used for roads, or for projects and programs not permitted under the 18th amendment to Washington's constitution.

c. Shift sales tax revenues generated by transportation from the general fund to transportation purposes.

Given the strong recent growth in the economy, it is possible to shift these surplus general fund revenues to transportation without cutting into education or other important general programs. To alleviate concerns that these funds would be needed in the future if the economy slows, an annual re-authorization of these funds based on revenue forecasts under the 601 spending limit could be included as part of the proposal. At a given growth rate threshold, the funds would revert to the general fund.

50. Find ways to achieve transportation investment equity. Adopt a new regional equity principle for taxes and fees based on a combination meeting the needs of the region that generates the funds and sustaining the integrity of the statewide transportation system.

The current system of allocating transportation revenues around the state will not adequately address transportation funding needs in the urban counties with the most acute problems. In considering equity, the needs of the statewide system must be addressed. Through the regional approach, funds raised in the region for transportation improvements should be invested in the region. Future regional investments should include a 'large project fund' for large regional and local transportation projects not eligible for funding through the state system.

Create a three-tiered regional equity principle:

- Allocate sufficient funds to basic operations, maintenance, preservation and agency overhead at a minimum level for the statewide, county and city roadway systems from statewide funds;
- Allocate all other funds so they primarily benefit the region in which funds are generated;
- Allocate all funds locally or regionally authorized for that region's benefit. For example, at the second tier, a minimum return would be guaranteed and at the third tier, 100% of locally or regionally voted taxes or fees would remain in the home region.

51. Create local and regional revenue options such as:

a. Optional regional vehicle license fee at some level up to $100 per vehicle.

This is a flat fee in which each car pays the same amount annually. As such, it is regressive and imposes a disproportionate burden on people of lower incomes.

b. If regional transportation authorities are not created, increase the existing county-authorized vehicle license fee from $15 to some amount up to $45 per vehicle.

This would be a flat fee, paid annually by the owner of each vehicle.

c. Create a two-tiered user charge consisting of a flat fee portion per vehicle plus a variable portion based on miles traveled.

This option could consist of two parts, for example, a $25 flat fee per vehicle plus a mileage charge.

d. Authorize an optional increase in the local sales tax (in addition to the statewide option proposed above), to be dedicated to transportation purposes at the local level.

(Note: the 2000 legislature has implemented this opton.)

Revenues could be divided among the county, transit district(s), and cities. Entities would have to agree on common priorities.

e. Give more flexibility for increasing the existing local option gas tax.

f. Authorize an additional local option gas tax to cities over 100,000 in population at a rate of up to 2 cents per gallon.

g. Authorize to counties and cities tax increment financing based not on the property tax but on the sales tax.

If a specific investment in transportation facilities could be demonstrated to increase taxable retail sales, the portion of the sales tax revenues attributable to the investment would be reserved to service financing costs.

52. Grant regions revenue authority and investing flexibility to address their high priority needs.

53. In order to address more specifically varying transportation needs throughout the state, some state transportation mobility funds should be shared with regions.

54. Develop a new joint regional programming and prioritization process for federal funds that were previously allocated to the state, regions and local jurisdictions.

Federal dollars previously allocated to the state, regions and local jurisdictions would be pooled and prioritized by region. Entities within a region would develop agreements on how federal dollars should be used.

- Focus federal dollars on major corridors to meet the commission benchmarks.
- Increase flexibility of mixing and matching funds for various purposes and modes by consolidating funds.
- Hold federal bridge, safety, and transit funds out of the regional pools and allocate according to federal law.
- Concentrate on fewer and larger projects by region.
- Increase direct distributions to small jurisdictions from the state.
- Federally funded projects would be managed only by designated jurisdictions. Administration of federal funds would continue to be located at WSDOT, as required by federal law.

55. In addition to regional programming and prioritization of federal funds, include state funds in the new process. This could entail having competitive grant programs run at the regional level.

56. Include new local option regional funds in the joint regional programming and prioritization pool of federal and/or state funds.

RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Public surveys in Washington consistently show that a high value is placed on preservation and enhancement of the environment and native habitat. Indeed, these values are key to the identity of the Northwest. Yet there is the perception of permitting and regulation as 'red tape,' a sign of government waste and inefficiency. Permitting is no longer perceived as a process that is designed to protect the environment, and it may not be achieving substantive results.

The problem with permitting is twofold. First, the requirements are too complex, time-consuming, and sometimes redundant. Second, critics of the existing system argue that there is an emphasis on procedure over substance. Such a system does not produce the best projects, or those that best protect the environment. Some of the current emphasis on process may be due to lack of agreement on the substance. The commission may be able to foster a consensus on the actual protections needed, at least for transportation projects, which could allow the process to be streamlined.

There is a backlog of permitting, some of it due to recent actions required by the Endangered Species Act. A recent article highlights the fact that the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers offices in the Pacific Northwest has a backlog of 880 permits, and a quadrupling of their workload since the 'endangered' listing of several species of salmon in 1999.

57. Create one-stop permitting with decisions that stick.

- **a. Delegate authority. Empower local governments with 'certified agency' status to make final decisions on permits.**
- **b. Authorize permit reviews to be conducted by certified jurisdictions to avoid multiple reviews.**

58. Require early agreements.

- **a. Require early interagency agreements early in decision-making process.**
- **b. Provide early involvement by stakeholders.**

A model of early involvement could improve the NEPA process. Timetables would be established — no new issues, concerns, or lawsuits are permitted after the investment of substantial time and resources.

- **c. Involve resource agencies early in planning, design, and critical area designation.**

59. Create project teams.

Representatives from each of the permitting agencies would be assigned to a project and see it through the process together. Designate a permit coordinator from the team.

60. Coordinate mitigation across jurisdictions.

Work with local agencies and state agencies to coordinate review efforts. Work to inform federal agencies of the ongoing work of state, local, and regional bodies, and attempt to coordinate with federal agencies to the extent possible. A goal is to achieve delegated authority of federal review to responsible state, regional, or local authorities. Through the techniques made possible by advances in technology and knowledge, mitigation may be performed more strategically than before, over a broader geographic area and over a comprehensive range of projects and project types.

a. Coordinate environmental mitigation strategies with other agencies.

Coordinate with other federal, state and local agencies, and with non-governmental organizations to develop comprehensive strategies. Use geographic information system (GIS) mapping to determine the most cost-effective and environmentally beneficial mitigation efforts.

b. Use watershed based planning.

Incorporate a holistic strategy for environmental mitigation, instead of project-by-project review. Create an overall program of watershed management that integrates environmental programs and decision making in a broad range of ecological areas, including wetlands, flood management, storm water, hazardous waste, aquatic sediments, fish and wildlife, erosion control, and stream restoration. Map the entire state using geographic information systems (GIS).

61. Encourage pilot projects.

A sample pilot project would be to consider endangered species on a program-wide level rather than on a project-by-project basis. Another may the use of GIS mapping to determine impacts on endangered species habitat early in planning for a project.

62. Empower regional authorities with permit responsibility.

- Planning — In the development of transportation project environmental impact statements, allow regional authorities to give programmatic EIS approval. Programmatic approval may also be linked to regional trans-

portation plans and area-wide mitigation provisions. Locals may also be responsible for identification of critical areas, and come up with project alternatives and mitigation programs. Locals would be held responsible for growth management compliance, and also for meeting benchmarks for mobility and air quality.

- Project coordination — Convene regulators and agree on roles, jurisdictions, and authority. For those projects whose scope is too large to be covered by a programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS), acknowledge those elements that require site-specific EIS and mitigation. Have a coordinated project team that can agree early on alternatives, negotiate review schedules, and negotiate the level of detail of review.
- Implementation — Set project-specific timeline contracts; have consequences for any delay. If necessary, designate and fund regulatory staff. Empower transportation project managers to make decisions. Local agencies would be required to give up some authority.

63. Make better use of current environmental processes.

The following are methods of working better with available resources:

- Better integration of NEPA/SEPA: to the extent possible, coordinate reviews at the federal, state and local levels.
- Create permit centers with federal, state and local permit agency staff under one roof, using the existing pilot center in Lacey as a model.
- Simplify public notice requirements, coordinate across jurisdictions, and eliminate redundancies.
- Fund staff in resource agencies to review permits: Staff shortages are a principal cause of delay in issuing environmental permits. Funding staff positions for specific projects or on an ad hoc basis will facilitate earlier project review.
- Set and honor timelines.
- Develop an environmental cost model to document and monitor the costs of environmental review, permitting, and mitigation on projects.

64. Write and apply substantive standards for transportation (road) projects to streamline permit approvals thereby reducing process review delays. Identify highway projects of statewide significance to be eligible for review under this option.

APPENDIX

PRESENTERS

The work of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation is indebted to the volunteer contribution of all the individuals and agencies listed below. Presenters were invited who could express a diversity of viewpoints on topics and who could participate in discussions challenging the status quo. Their time commitment and their willingness to share their expertise are greatly appreciated.

Administration Committee *(listed in alphabetical order)*

Jerry Alb, *WSDOT, permit process*
John Ball, *Wash. Federation of State Employees, quality program*
Kim Becklund, *City of Bellevue, permit reform*
Scott Boettcher, *Washington Permit Assistance Center, permit assistance center*
Jonathan Brock, *University of Washington, managed competition*
Phil Bussey, *Washington Roundtable, nationwide transportation study*
Bill Chapman, *Preston Gates & Ellis, permit reform*
Rick Cocker, *Cocker Fennessy, public opinion research*
Gary Demich, *WSDOT, I-5 DuPont interchange*
Bill Eager, *TDA, comparative highway construction cost figures*
Jerry Ellis, *WSDOT, public-private initiatives*
Tim Erickson, *WSDOT, commercial vehicle information systems*
Steve Excell, *Washington Roundtable, statewide comparison of transportation expenses*
Stan Finkelstein, *Association of Washington Cities, local jurisdictions (city)*
Bob Gregory, *Kelso/Longview, public works merger*
Jim Hamilton, *Federal Way Chamber of Commerce, local business viewpoint*
Charlie Howard, *WSDOT, 1977 WSDOT consolidation*
Tom Jensen, *Washington Roundtable, transportation investment cost analysis*
Bob Keller, *Washington Federation of State Employees, quality program*
Greg Kipp, *King County, early agency involvement in project development/review*
Glen Leicester, *Greater Vancouver (BC) Transportation Authority, TransLink*
Dean Lookingbill, *Southwest Washington RTC, role of MPOs and RTPOs*
Jim McCoard, *Washington Federation of State Employees, quality program*
Mary McCumber, *Puget Sound Regional Council, early planning and involvement*
Rob McKenna, *King County, closing the transportation infrastructure gap*
Helga Morgenstern, *WSDOT, efficiency measures*

Chris Mudgett, *County Road Administration Board, local jurisdictions (county)*
John Musgrave, *West Seattle Chamber of Commerce, transportation funding equity*
Joyce Olson, *Community Transit, project delivery and efficiencies*
Jerry Porter, *Kiewit Pacific Co., design/build case studies*
Ron Sims, *King County, county transportation role*
Ken Smith, *value engineering*
Rick Smith, *WSDOT, design-build project delivery*
Ken Stone, *WSDOT, permit process*
Tricia Thomson, *American Public Works Association, permitting and permit centers*
Eugene Wasserman, *Seattle Neighborhood Business Council, small business viewpoint*

Investment Committee *(listed in order of presentations given)*

Greg Selstead, *WSDOT, process to update WSDOT's 20-year plan*
Daniela Bremmer, *WSDOT, process to update WSDOT's 20-year plan*
Charlie Howard, *WSDOT, traffic congestion, WTP update, preservation of roads*
Sam Seskin, *Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade and Douglas, land use and transportation*
Paula Hammond, *WSDOT, WSDOT operated road network*
Chris Mudgett, *County Road Administration Board, county road network*
Diane Carlson, *Association of Washington Cities, city street network*
Tom Phillips, *Community Planning and Research, homeowner preferences*
G. .B. Arrington, *Tri-Met, Portland, OR, Linking transportation and land use*
Mary McCumber, *Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), GMA and Vision 2020*
Peter Beaulieu, *PSRC, freight and economic development*
Paul Chilcote, *Port of Tacoma, freight mobility*
Jim Toomey, *Port of Pasco, economic development*
Rick Walsh, *King County, Metro transit*
Jeff Hamm, *Jefferson Transit, transit*
Mark Hallenbeck, *University of Washington, HOV system performance*
Rob Fellows, *WSDOT, HOV system*
Mike Hoover, *State Senate Republican Caucus, HOV system*
Chris Endresen, *PSRC, HOV system*
Ken Kirkland, *WSDOT, maintenance of WSDOT road network*
Dave Parkinson, *Puget Sound and Pacific Railroad, short line railroads*
Steve Anderson, *WSDOT passenger and freight rail operations in Washington*

Investment Committee *(continued)*

Jim Slakey, *WSDOT passenger and freight rail operations in Washington*
Terry McCarthy, *WSDOT, Washington State Ferries*
Bill Roach, *King County Metro, commute trip reduction*
Bryan Lagerberg, *King County Metro, commute trip reduction*
Karen Schmidt, *Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board, freight mobility*

Revenue Committee *(listed in order of presentation given)*

Don Taylor, *Washington Department of Revenue*
Gary Lowe, *Washington State Association of Counties*
Chris Mudgett, *County Road Administration Board*
Stan Finkelstein, *Association of Washington Cities*
Diane Carlson, *Association of Washington Cities*
Jerry Fay, *Transportation Improvement Board*
Denny Ingham, *WSDOT TransAid Office*
Dan Snow, *Washington State Transit Association*
Joyce Olson, *Community Transit*
Jay Reich, *Preston, Gates & Ellis*
Helga Morgenstern, *WSDOT Finance and Administration*
Eric Meale, *WSDOT Economics Division*
Aubrey Davis, *Washington Transportation Commission*
Jerry Ellis, *WSDOT Economic Initiatives*
Greg Hanon, *Western States Petroleum Association*
Mark Hallenbeck, *University of Washington TRAC*
Rob Fellows, *WSDOT Office of Urban Mobility*
Mike Hoover, *Senate Republic Caucus*
Chris Endresen, *Puget Sound Regional Council*
John Palmer, *Environmental Protection Agency*
Doug Howell, *Center for Energy and the Environment*
Rob McKenna, *Metropolitan King County Council*

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Summarized below are findings adopted on Jan. 12, 2000 that are providing the basis for the commission's accords and options.

• Understanding the problems

Washington's population has grown 36 percent in the last two decades and is expected to climb another 36 percent by 2020. Population growth, increased employment, more cars and more trips are impacting Washington's roadways. Finding resources to maintain roads adequately is a major problem faced by counties and cities around the state. Highly restrictive funding processes and the great number of entities responsible for planning and coordination have led to a system that doesn't always make the most cost-effective investments. In two measures of urban congestion — percent of urban lanes congested and traffic per lane — Washington ranks among the worst in the nation.

• Recognizing the consequences

Washington's transportation system influences almost every facet of life in the state, including how we spend our time, where we live and work and the profitability of our businesses

• Responding to the public

Polling results and the passage of Initiative 695 demonstrate that many Washington residents are skeptical about the efficiency of current transportation programs and funding. However, polling also demonstrates that a majority of voters believe Washington needs to maintain and improve its transportation system by increasing investments over the next five years majority of the voters, but gas taxes are considered more acceptable than other options.

• Simplifying transportation governance and accountability

While drivers may not notice when they cross from one jurisdiction to another, Washington's transportation system is a patchwork created and maintained by more than 450 governmental entities through processes that have evolved slowly over the years. There isn't always adequate coordination, and processes that once served important functions have sometimes outlived their usefulness. In some areas, the complexity of the system and the number of players suggest needs for greater simplicity and accountability.

• Fostering greater funding flexibility

Much of the state's funding is distributed through accounts restricted to specific uses, such as repairing roads or increasing safety. The commission is considering whether agencies and jurisdictions should be granted greater flexibility in setting funding priorities.

• Maintaining the transportation system

Washington's transportation system represents public assets worth more than $100 billion. Providing sufficient maintenance to preserve these assets is an important priority. While most state highways are currently in good condition, many bridges, urban arterials, county roads and city streets are not. Heavy vehicles, studded tires and weather contribute significantly to deterioration of roads and bridges.

• How much congestion is acceptable?

Residents of urban areas agree there is too much congestion, but there is no consensus on what level is acceptable. Each year in Washington, congestion wastes time and resources worth more than $2 billion. The commission is looking for ways to balance investing in building more roads with expanding public transit and reducing the number of trips people make in vehicles.

• Identifying needs and priorities

The more than 450 jurisdictions and agencies that shape Washington's transportation system have identified needs for the next 20 years that by will exceed funding available from current sources by billions of dollars. The state lacks consistent methods for measuring needs across jurisdictions, however, and not all entities use the best tools available for identifying the highest priorities and most cost-effective investments.

• Reducing maintenance costs

Transportation agencies in other states have reduced costs by establishing clear performance goals and reengineering workplace procedures to encourage frontline employees to come forward with cost-saving ideas. Another potential strategy is allowing managed competition between private companies and public-sector work teams.

• Re-evaluating the permitting process

Businesses, individuals and transportation agencies go through the complex process of obtaining permits before launching construction projects. The foundation exists for a thorough reform of permitting processes at both the state and local levels with the goal of protecting public interests while reducing the time and costs involved.

• Promoting innovation and efficiency in constructing projects

Governments around the country have saved time and money completing projects by venturing from the traditional design-bid-build process. The commission is considering a number of alternate strategies, including the design-build process, in which the same entity both designs and builds a project. Processes that promote innovation and create incentives increase the likelihood of finishing projects on time and on budget.

• Distributing funds effectively

The state doesn't always distribute transportation funds based on objective measures reflecting each agency or jurisdiction's actual roadway responsibilities. Basing allocations on figures such as miles of roadway, traffic volumes, population growth and the local tax base are options to look at.

- **Facing the gas tax dilemma**

State gas tax revenues — generated by collecting a flat amount for each gallon of gas purchased (regardless of the price does not keep pace with inflation.

- **Making transportation a factor in land use decisions**

Over the last 50 years, residential and commercial development in Washington has tended towards low-density suburbs, promoting a heavy reliance on automobiles that underlies congestion problems in most metropolitan areas. Now, governments are looking for ways to respond to new growth regulations and growing consumer demand for compact, mixed-use developments that help reduce congestion.

- **Encouraging carpooling and transit use**

Park-and-ride lots have proven to be a strong incentive for transit use and carpooling; many lots in congested corridors are now full.